



7050-01

LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

Request for Letters of Intent to Apply for 2015 Technology Initiative Grant Funding

AGENCY: Legal Services Corporation

ACTION: Notice

SUMMARY: The Legal Services Corporation (LSC) is issuing this Notice to describe the conditions under which Letters of Intent will be received for the Technology Initiative Grant (TIG) program. LSC's TIG program was established in 2000. Since that time, LSC has made 570 grants totaling more than \$46 million. This grant program provides an important tool to help achieve LSC's goal of increasing the quantity and quality of legal services available to eligible persons. Projects funded under the TIG program develop, test and replicate innovative technologies that can enable grant recipients and state justice communities to improve low-income persons' access to high quality legal assistance through an integrated and well managed technology system. When submitting Letters of Intent, applicants should consider the growth and continued development of technology and the resulting effects on the practice of law, program management and service delivery.

DATES: Letters of Intent must be submitted by 11:59 pm EDT on March 20, 2015.

ADDRESSES: Letters of Intent must be submitted electronically at <http://lscgrants.lsc.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jane Ribadeneyra, Program Analyst, Office of Program Performance, Legal Services Corporation, 3333 K Street NW, Washington, DC, 20007; (202) 295-1554 (phone); ribadeneyraj@lsc.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

General Information

All prospective applicants for 2015 funds from the Legal Services Corporation's (LSC) Technology Initiative Grant (TIG) program must submit a "Letter of Intent" (LOI) prior to submitting a formal application. The format and contents of a Letter of Intent should conform to the requirements specified below in Section IV.

The submission of a LOI enables a prospective applicant to vet its project ideas with TIG staff, who can then identify those projects that have a reasonable chance of success in the competitive grant process. LSC will solicit full proposals for those projects that have a reasonable chance of success in the grant competition process based on LSC's analysis of the information provided in the LOI.

LSC Requirements

Technology Initiative Grant funds are subject to all the requirements of the Legal Services Corporation Act of 1974, as amended (LSC Act), any applicable appropriations acts and any other applicable laws, rules, regulations, policies, guidelines, instructions, and other directives of the Legal Services Corporation (LSC), including, but not limited to, [the LSC Audit Guide for Recipients and Auditors](#), [the Accounting Guide for LSC Recipients \(2010 Edition\)](#), [the CSR Handbook \(2011 Edition\)](#), [the 1981 LSC Property Manual](#) (as amended) and [the Property Acquisition and Management Manual](#), with any amendments to the foregoing adopted before or during the period of the grant (see <http://grants.lsc.gov/rin/grantee-guidance>). Before submitting a Letter of Intent, applicants should be familiar with LSC's subgrant and transfer requirements at 45 CFR parts 1610 and 1627 (see <http://www.lsc.gov/about/laws-regulations/lsc-regulations-cfr->

[45-part-1600-et-seq](#)), particularly as they pertain to payments of LSC funds to other entities for programmatic activities.

For additional information and resources regarding TIG compliance, including transfers, subgrants, third-party contracting, conflicts of interest, grant modification procedures, and special TIG grant assurances, see <http://tig.lsc.gov/grants/compliance>.

Eligible Applicants

TIG awards are only available to current LSC basic field grant recipients. A TIG will not be awarded to any applicant unless the applicant is in good standing on any existing TIG projects. Applicants must be up to date according to the milestone schedule on all existing TIG projects prior to submitting a LOI or have requested and received an adjustment to the original milestone schedule.

TIG grants will not be awarded to any applicant unless the applicant has made satisfactory progress on all TIG grants previously awarded to it and is not subject to any short-term funding (i.e., less than one year) on basic field grants. LSC recipients that have had a previous TIG terminated for failure to provide timely reports and submissions are not eligible to receive a TIG for three years after their earlier grant was terminated. This policy does not apply to applicants that worked with LSC to end a TIG early after an unsuccessful project implementation resulting from technology limitations, a failed proof of concept, or other reasons outside of the applicant's control.

Funding Availability

LSC has received an appropriation of \$4 million for fiscal year 2015 to fund TIG projects. In 2014, 38 TIG projects received funding with a median funding amount of \$75,270. (See <http://tig.lsc.gov/grants/past-grant-awards> for more information on past

awards.) LSC recommends a minimum amount for TIG funding requests of \$40,000, but lower requests will be considered. There is no maximum amount for TIG funding requests that are within the total appropriation for TIG.

Collaborations

The TIG program encourages applicants to reach out to and include in TIG projects others interested in access to justice – the courts, bar associations, pro bono projects, libraries, and social service agencies. Partnerships can enhance the reach, effectiveness and sustainability of many projects.

Grant Categories

LSC will accept projects in two application categories:

- 1) Innovations and Improvements
- 2) Replication and Adaptation

Grant Category 1: Innovations and Improvements

The Innovations and Improvements Category is designated for projects that: (1) implement new or innovative approaches for using technology in legal services, or (2) enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of existing technologies so that they may be better used to increase the quality and quantity of services to clients.

Although there is no funding limit or matching requirement for applications in this category, additional weight is given to projects with strong support from partners. Proposals for initiatives with broad applicability and/or that would have impact throughout the legal services community are strongly encouraged. For applications that do not have broad applicability or impact, LSC will carefully consider the amount of the request and the balance of cost and potential benefit.

Grant Category 2: Replication and Adaptation

The Replication and Adaptation category is for proposals that seek to replicate, adapt, or provide added value to the work of prior technology projects. This includes, but is not limited to, the implementation and improvement of tested methodologies and technologies from previous TIG projects. Applicants may also replicate technology projects funded outside of the TIG program, including sectors outside the legal aid community, such as other social services organizations, the broader non-profit community, and the private sector.

Project proposals in the Replication and Adaptation category may include, but are not limited to:

A: Replication of Previous TIG Projects

During the past fifteen years of TIG funding, there have been many successes. A list of examples of replicable projects and final reports can be found at <http://tig.lsc.gov/grants/final-reports/final-report-samples-replicable-projects>. LSC requires that any original software developed with TIG funding be available to other legal services programs at little or no cost. Applicants should look to previous successful TIG projects and determine how they could be replicated at a reduced cost from the original project, and/or how they could be built upon and enhanced. Projects where original software or content has already been created lend themselves to replication, and LSC encourages programs to look to these projects to see how they could benefit the delivery systems in their state.

B: Automated Form Replication

LawHelp Interactive (LHI¹) is now deployed in 41 states. There are over 3,000 active HotDocs templates and A2J Author modules being hosted on the LawHelp Interactive National HotDocs Server at <https://lawhelpinteractive.org>. While there are differences from state to state in the content and format, many of these forms can be edited for use in other jurisdictions with less effort, hence a lower cost, than starting from scratch.

Even if a form differs from one state to another, the information needed to populate a form will, for the most part, be similar (What are the names of the plaintiff, the defendant, the children, etc.?). This means the interviews are more easily replicated than templates. All of these templates and interviews are available to be modified as needed. Applicants should identify which forms and templates are to be adapted, and then estimate the cost to do this and compare that to the cost of developing them from scratch.

LHI has the capacity to support Spanish, Vietnamese, Mandarin, and Korean language interviews. In addition, LHI has been integrated with other systems to allow the flow of information between LHI and court e-filing systems, and legal aid case management systems. An "Events" feature is being developed that will enable pro bono programs from across a state to use LHI interviews and forms to assign pre-screened pro bono cases and their documents to panel attorneys. For additional information, including examples, best practices, models and training materials, see the LawHelp Interactive Resource Center hosted by Pro Bono Net at <http://www.probono.net/dasupport> (you may need to request a free membership to access this website).

C: Replication of Technology Projects in Other Sectors

¹ LHI is an automated document server powered by HotDocs Server and made available to any LSC funded program at no charge. See <https://lawhelpinteractive.org>.

In addition to replicating other TIG funded technology projects, LSC encourages replication of proven technologies from non-LSC funded legal aid organizations as well as sectors outside the legal aid community. Ideas for replication may be found through resources and organizations such as LSNTAP, the ABA, international legal aid providers such as the Legal Services Society of British Columbia and [HiiL's Innovating Justice project](#) (<http://www.innovatingjustice.com>), Idealware (see the article on [Unleashing Innovation](#)), [NTEN](#), and [TechSoup](#).

III. Areas of Interest

LSC welcomes applications for a wide variety of projects. For 2015, LSC has four areas of particular interest in which programs are encouraged to submit proposals for innovative technology approaches. The designation of these areas does not in any way limit the scope of proposals in which LSC is interested. The 2015 areas of particular interest are:

A. Projects to Move Organizations Above the LSC Technology Baselines (revised 2015). The recently updated [*LSC Baselines: Technologies That Should Be in Place in a Legal Aid Office Today \(revised 2015\)*](#) provides a detailed overview of the technologies that enable modern legal aid offices to operate efficiently and effectively. While LSC's policy is that TIGs cannot be used to bring grantees up to the baselines in an area, we want to encourage applicants as they implement a baseline capacity to think about how they can do more than just the minimum. This area of interest is to encourage applicants to propose initiatives that advance their organizations beyond the 2015 Baselines by developing innovative, creative technology solutions that address at least one capacity identified in the Baselines and then exceeding it. Also, grantees applying under this area

of interest should address how their project could establish a new technology best practice that could be incorporated into future versions of the Baselines.

B. Technology Tools to Facilitate Access to Substantive Law Across Jurisdictions.

A variety of technologies have the potential to enhance access to legal information and resources related to substantive laws with a national reach. These resources may be especially valuable given that they would be applicable to clients and advocates across the country. In the past, LSC has had a similar area of interest for substantive federal laws because of their uniformity across jurisdictions. This area of interest includes state-specific laws that have similarities across states and as to which information, resources and tools can therefore be replicated across states. A good example of this is expungement. Tools built to facilitate the expungement process in one jurisdiction have been modified and successfully replicated in other jurisdictions. LSC wants to encourage grantees to expand this approach to other substantive areas of the law.

C. Automated Navigators for Pro Se Litigants. Navigating the complexities of the court system can be a challenge for advocates, and even more so for low-income persons representing themselves. This area encourages development of personal case navigators for low-income litigants to remind them of due dates, monitor court dockets, advise them on trial preparations, and coach them on courtroom strategies. While grantees do not have the resources to assign a coach to each pro se litigant, technology offers the promise to build automated systems that can help serve this role.

Some existing TIGs have started to explore such systems already using automated SMS reminders for appointments. This area of interest encourages grantees to take this concept to the next level by building systems specific to case types that use timelines and

monitor court dockets to guide pro se litigants through the entire course of their cases. Once set up, the system would remind the user of important dates and direct them to resources such as automated forms and videos. With the cooperation of the court, the system could monitor the court docket to notify the users of hearing dates and, if pleadings were filed by the other side, alert users to the next steps needed to respond and deadlines.

D. Innovations in Legal Information Design and Delivery. Content should be developed with the end user in mind, but too often the end result is a reflection of what the developer determines the end user will need, rather than what the user determines he or she will best understand and find most helpful. Technology provides an opportunity to design and deliver legal information that is optimized for the end user. There are good examples of how user-centric design can improve legal innovation (see www.legaltechdesign.com and www.nulawlab.org). Projects in this area of interest could incorporate new approaches to visual law, online learning, user interaction and "legal information literacy" in the design and delivery of content. This could potentially focus on low/no-literacy and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) communities or others who are traditionally under-served by traditional methods. Alternatively, a project could also improve the design and effectiveness of online training and substantive practice resources for advocates and volunteers.

IV. Specific Letter of Intent Requirements

One Project per Letter of Intent

Applicants may submit multiple LOIs, but a separate LOI should be submitted for each project for which funding is sought.

Letter Requirements and Format

Letters of Intent must be submitted using the online system at <http://lscgrants.lsc.gov>. Additional instructions and information can be found on the TIG website at <http://tig.lsc.gov/grants/application-process>. This system will walk you through the process of creating a simple two-page LOI. The LOI should concisely provide the following information about the proposed project:

1. **Category** – select the appropriate category from the drop down list.
2. **Description of Project (maximum 2500 characters)** - Briefly describe the basic elements of the project, including the specific technology(ies) the project will develop or implement; how they will be developed, how they will operate, the function they will serve within the legal services delivery system, their expected impact, and other similar factors. (Only the impact should be highlighted here; more details about the system's benefits should be provided below.)
3. **Major Benefits (maximum 2500 characters)** - Describe the specific ways in which the project will increase or improve services to clients and/or enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of program operations. To the extent feasible, discuss both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of these benefits.
4. **Estimated Costs (maximum 1500 characters)** - Start by stating the amount of funding you are seeking from the TIG program, followed by the estimated total project cost, summarizing the anticipated costs of the major components of the project. List anticipated contributions, both in-kind and monetary, from all partners involved in the project.

5. **Major Partners (maximum 1500 characters)** - Identify organizations that are expected to be important partners. Specify the role(s) each partner will play.
6. **Innovation/Replication (maximum 1500 characters)** - Identify how and why the proposed project is new and innovative and/or is a replication or adaptation of a previous technology project. Identify how and why the proposed project can significantly benefit and/or be replicated by other legal services providers and/or the legal services community at large.

Letter of Intent Deadline

Letters of Intent must be completed and submitted into the online system at <http://lscgrants.lsc.gov> no later than **11:59 p.m. EDT, Friday, March 20, 2015**. The online system may experience technical difficulties due to heavy traffic on the day of the deadline. Applicants are strongly encouraged to complete LOI submissions as early as possible.

LSC will not accept applications submitted after the application deadline unless a waiver of the deadline has been approved in advance (see Waiver Authority). Therefore, allow sufficient time for online submission.

LSC will provide confirmation via email upon the completed electronic submission of each Letter of Intent. Keep this email as verification that the program's LOI was submitted. If no confirmation email is received, inquire about the status of your LOI at Techgrants@lsc.gov.

Selection Process

LSC will initially review all LOI to determine whether they conform to the required format and clearly present all of the required elements. These requirements are

listed and described above. Failure to meet these requirements may result in rejection of the LOI.

Each proposal will be reviewed to identify those LOI that propose projects likely to improve access to justice or the efficiency, effectiveness, and quality of legal services provided by grantees. The LOI will also be reviewed to determine the extent to which the project proposed is clearly described and well thought out, offers major benefits to our targeted client community, is cost-effective, involves all of the parties needed to make it successful and sustainable, and is either innovative or a cost-effective replication of prior successful projects. Those applicants satisfying these criteria will be invited to submit full applications.

Next Steps for Successful Applicants

LSC will notify successful Letter of Intent applicants by Thursday, April 30, 2015. Successful applicants will have until 11:59 p.m. EDT, Monday, June 15, 2015 to complete full applications in the online application system.

Waiver Authority

LSC, upon its own initiative or when requested, may waive provisions in this Notice at its sole discretion under extraordinary circumstances and when it is in the best interest of the eligible client community. Waivers may be granted only for requirements that are discretionary and not mandated by statute or regulation. Any request for a waiver must set forth the extraordinary circumstances for the request and be included in the application. LSC will not consider a request to waive the deadline for a LOI unless the waiver request is received by LSC prior to the deadline.

Contact Information

For information on the status of a current TIG project, contact **Eric Mathison**, Program Analyst, Telephone: 202-295-1535; Email: emathison@lsc.gov.

For questions about projects in CT, DC, IL, IN, ME, MA, MI, NH, NJ, NY, OH, PA, RI, WI, WV, VT, contact **David Bonebrake**, Program Counsel, Telephone: 202.295.1547; Email: dbonebrake@lsc.gov.

For questions about projects in AK, AZ, CA, CO, GU, HI, ID, IA, KS, MP, MN, MT, NE, NV, NH, NM, ND, OK, OR, SD, TX, UT, WA, WY, contact **Glenn Rawdon**, Program Counsel, Telephone: 202.295.1552; Email: grawdon@lsc.gov.

For questions about projects in AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, MO, NC, PR, SC, TN, VI, VA, contact **Jane Ribadeneyra**, Program Analyst, Telephone: 202.295.1554, Email: ribadeneyraj@lsc.gov.

If you have a general question, please email techgrants@lsc.gov.

Dated: February 11, 2015.

Stefanie K. Davis,

Assistant General Counsel.

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